the Freeman

Ideas on Liberty

DECEMBER 1968

"BORN FREE"?

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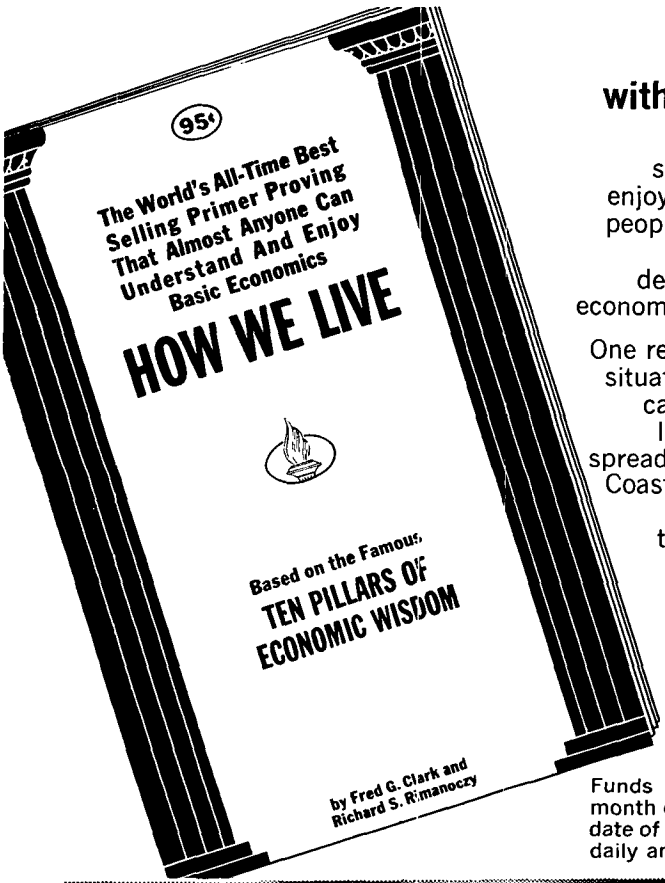
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A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF IDEAS ON LIBERTY

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KNOW THYSELF

A REVISITATION

DANIEL R. DIXON

OUR COUNTRY is wracked by agony and distress when the cornucopia of food and products was never greater. The bewildering and frightening erosion of spiritual, moral, and ethical standards of yesterday leaves us lost and distraught. The standards of yesterday, like yesterday itself, are irretrievable. Could it be, that among this welter of discord and confusion there is rhyme or reason or understanding? With temerity and naivete, it is believed that there is.

A murderer fires a single shot and becomes an outlaw. A bombardier pulls a switch and returns to a hero's welcome while thousands perish. The ancient Spartans, while dying to hold Thermopylae Pass, left a monument in the imperishable phrase, "Stranger, go tell the Lacedaemonians that we lie here, obedient to their commands." Some kill, some suffer death. But to kill or be killed is not of concern. The question is, "By whose mandate?" Whose law shall one obey?

Is there a source of guidance, a body of law, to provide the rules of life? The prevalence of order in the physical universe is so manifest as to preclude denial. The green grass grows all around and no one knows why. Neither atheist nor agnostic can deny the existence of grass-growing power, though the reasons why be disputed. Our environment is surrounded and controlled, and indeed locked, by the complex laws of the universe. Every step, from

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cradle to grave, is predicated upon the assumption that the "law of gravity" and innumerable other "laws" will not change. Man has not created, and cannot alter or change, one law of nature. His abilities are restricted exclusively to the discovery and implementation of existing law. The world of science exists and expands upon the predicate of a consistent pattern of natural law. New "knowledge" is but a new discovery of pre-existing law. The possibility of exhausting the universe of knowledge is inconceivable. Man's knowledge is yet but a spark of light in the dark and limitless universe. The unknown is infinite as the infinite is unknown.

Life has meaning only on the assumption of the continuing consistency of order in our environment. Some achieve this status of belief by religious faith. Others unwittingly arrive at the same status by a shallow cynicism and self-deceit. Those who deny God do so with the arrogant complacency, or belief, that no change will develop in established order. The avowed cynic thereby avows a faith more absolute than the professed apostolate. The statement, "God is dead," is a puerile and senseless expression. The planets continue to whirl through space in their accustomed order. Day and night follow successively and as the sun rises each day it seems that the infinite, or cosmic force conventionally described as God, is conducting business as usual.

Integrating New Discoveries with the Infinite Law

Of course, the dogmas and teaching of all religions are confronted with the obvious necessity of reconciling with the new. The concept of Heaven is threatened by a penetration of space. A reorientation of concepts is needed, not a denial of the existence of infinite law. Reassurance in this respect is everywhere obvious. The laws of the universe have been consistent by permitting passage of interplanetary craft into the reaches of space. Such craft continue their remote journeys operating on the same laws of science and physics which permitted their departure from earth.

The question is, does the Great Plan span the moral and spiritual as well as the physical and scientific? The laws of science are persuasive only by reason of statistical consistency. One and one appears to equal two however many times it is tested. Gravity appears to invariably pull downward. Knowledge is such only so long as variance in the pattern is not detected. The discovery of a variance then initiates a search for a new

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pattern of consistency with the belief that such a pattern exists.

The rules for human behavior, if such exist, are more difficult to identify. The moral, legal, and religious mandates against killing, stealing, lying, bigamy, and other "crimes" are subject to much dissent as to nature and degree of prohibition to be imposed. The variables attending their application breed violent dispute. The current controversy over the abolition of capital punishment is typical. However great the disparity in the moral codes of different people, the essentiality of some moral code is a universal need for every rational creature. The need is one absolute. In the process of rejecting one rule, another is inadvertently selected in its stead. Thus, by default, all subscribe to some code. Such adopted codes have limitless variations but all are compilations of the concepts controlling and guiding such persons.

The Role of Religion

Religion has provided most of the civilized rules of conduct. Witch doctor, Code of Hammurabi, Law of Moses, sun god, monkey worship, sacred cow, or sacrificial lamb, whatever its form, there is a universal supplication to the powers that be. The need for a moral code is clear, the existence of many moral codes is clear; but the proper content of a moral code is not clear nor is the evidence clear of the existence of any satisfactory or durable moral code. In what, then, can one believe? Man must worship something. The finite seeking of the infinite is compulsive. Idolatry, hero worship, admiration, idealism, or religious devotion, all are derivative from the assumption there exists a higher order. This compulsive force to understand is a lifelong struggle, a constant search for verities.

The solace of prayer has sustained the tormented since the beginning. Is this a meaningless and empty endeavor, an insult to intelligence? To pray for alms is a shoddy entreaty. But to seek guidance seems a valid endeavor, even if evaluated solely from psychological standards. Its power stems from a passionate desire to partake of infinite knowledge that we sense exists but know not how to attain. A penetration is sought beyond one's normal, more tangible abilities.

It is a quest for truth that assumes the existence of some greater knowledge which can be made known to the supplicant. The source of such knowledge may be subject to dispute and may not be the domain of man to know, but the existence of such storehouse of

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knowledge is manifest and there for the taking. Every day brings new discoveries, some dramatic some prosaic, but each reassures there are many others yet to be revealed. The search for verities, be they physical, chemical, electrical, spiritual, ethical, or otherwise, is a valid undertaking.

Natural Law

In the realm of jurisprudence, rules of conduct have long been sought from the guidance provided by "natural law." This concept, like religious belief, is defended only to the extent that it is observed that civilized society has long held a compelling feeling that nature provided the rules for our behavior, if we but had the wisdom to decipher them. However, all codes of behavior embody concepts of right and wrong, of good and evil. These are counterbalances essential for man's stability. The implicit evaluation of some degree of good or evil touches and colors every human act.

Here then is the vortex of all individual struggle for a way of life, and there is neither escape nor simple solution. Those who escape to the refuge of an ivory tower avoid but do not conquer. In this relentless struggle it is interesting to note that the foulest acts of human behavior are draped with justification. There seem to be few, if any, avowed persons of evil. Alibis are erected to justify each and every "wrongful" act. Why? Does this not constitute a tacit admission of the dominance of good over evil? Is a "natural law" applying a gentle but relentless pressure too subtle for discernment to seek a "better" way, even within the most callous? How else could man "rise" after each black orgy of history or have reason to hope for a better way of life in the future?

Logic is widely espoused, but it is a most perilous foundation. Man has no standards for discerning what is logical or illogical. He has only the capacity for conviction that something is right or wrong, good or evil. That which we label as logical is simply the evidence presented to the mind which must ultimately pass final judgment on something as right or wrong, as good or evil. There are no other criteria. All decisions are thus moral judgments. In seeking meaning to life and the relation between physical and ethical, let us note that our complex computers similarly solve all their problems with a positive force and a negative force, and nothing more.

Common Sense

There seems to be a natural synapse in the minds of the young

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and the illiterate which translates acts or positions into an immediate posture of conviction as to the rightness or wrongness of that which is under judgment. This so-called "common sense" approach is a common characteristic of persons of strength and stability. Intense intellectual study must destroy this synapse depriving such persons of a valuable stabilizer. The disagreements of the "experts" are legend. Their mistakes are frequently both mystifying and monstrous. It is believed that prolonged study which focuses on data eventually displaces and destroys the ultimate basis for solution: a final conviction as to the validity of the position taken. The logician loses or forgets that all decisions are but moral judgments. He indulges in the fallacy of the capacity of the brain to contain sufficient data to be "logical."

The existence, as distinguished from the content, of a set of rules for human behavior has not been alleged. However, the need for such a set of rules is everywhere apparent. Man finds repose and security in a way of life which is stabilized and protected by established order. He strives forever to fabricate such an environment by making certain that which is uncertain, to transmute the infinite into the finite. A variety of self-imposed rituals enhance the personal sense of identity. This compulsion to conformity often suffocates the innovation needed for further development. Change, in and of itself, is abhorrent and frightening above all else.

Accelerated Change

During the long years of the agrarian economy, change was relatively slow. The harsh struggle for survival left little time for metaphysical speculation. The daily mechanism of chores and duties gave a sense of meaning which was satisfying, even if unrealistic. The dogmas of Puritan Christianity provided stern and positivistic guidelines for conduct. A strong sense of destiny gave our nation drive and direction. But change is now upon us as never before.

Science and technology are irresistible forces which are not to be denied. Massive change is producing massive social trauma. The dogmas and orthodoxy of religion are eroding under the impact of new knowledge derived from many sources, particularly space travel and technology. The amalgamation of churches and modification of church codes bear clear evidence of this trend. The mass migration from rural to urban areas must produce generalized acute apprehension. Recent studies of the

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instinct of territorial imperative provide some understanding of the degree of distress which must accompany such relocation. In addition, man is frightened by the release of time itself. His prior preoccupation with the burdens of survival left little time for self-contemplation. He now flees the time vacuum by a frantic and childish pursuit of superficial entertainment, stereotyped social engagements, and the anesthesia of alcohol. These, and other evidences of the impact of change, are everywhere apparent.

In Search of a Code

The loss of the moral code of Puritan philosophy is most manifest among our young. The need for a moral code is as essential as ever. In fact, it is so indispensable that our young are seeking to create a set of standards satisfactory to themselves. Their present distress is almost an hysteria which is evidenced by a compulsive and violent rejection of those who cannot provide or practice a satisfying moral code, in short, conventional society in toto.

The observation that our young, as exemplified by the "beatniks" or other similar groups, are highly immoral by conventional standards is not the point. By their standards, a code is being followed. Unfortunately, shallow leadership appears to be diverting a powerful drive for a more idealistic life into destructive and dangerous practices. It is recognized that many prominent persons and leaders are corrupt, that many in high places are more adept at intrigue than performance; yet the renunciation of principles and standards is not the answer nor does rationalization for escapism afford a solution. The beatnik mentality appears to be that of withdrawal, a surrender to defeat without struggle. In the end it only achieves debasement in the name of pacifism with an ultimate reward of nonentity in lieu of fulfillment.

It is not difficult to understand that many of our most gifted and talented youth, those most in need of a moral philosophy, caught in the vacuum of a waning native ideology, listen to new cults, including the sinister appeal of socialism and communism. Their talents are being lost for lack of a sense of meaning and purpose. Abandonment of society is not a solution either for society or for those withdrawing. It takes stamina to stand in the mud and fight back; and therein lies the challenge of today which is different only in degree from the challenges of yesterdays.

How shall one proceed, then, in seeking guidance in this age when

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the cynic dominates, when the rules of society suffer constant affront, and the specter of rebellion hangs on the horizon? The laws of the infinite are not easily comprehended. Paradox widely prevails, and agony and effort are needed to achieve some satisfactory rapport with life's dilemmas.

Validity of Thinking vs. Rapidity of Learning

"Nobody is perfect" is a soothing balm for careless error. Colossal error frequently results from overlooking the manifestly obvious. Self-deprecation results in most overlooking that the Infinite endowed all rational creatures with perfect minds. In this sense, validity of thinking is to be carefully distinguished from rapidity of learning. Few have the intellectual capacity described as genius. But all, or nearly so, have the capacity to learn, even though slowly. The "perfect" answer to one plus one is two and, therefore, can be "learned." Learning is available to all. With adequate endeavor, its accomplishments approach the miraculous. Often, the slow, plodding, meticulous effort of a less gifted person makes the discovery his more "intellectual" but less patient colleague misses. Discovery, like gold, is wherever found. The ancient fable of the tortoise and the hare is also applicable to the contest for intellectual achievement.

It can be inspiring to believe that the Great Plan provided to all the capacity to think perfectly and thereby to learn, to unravel some erstwhile unknown secret of the universe, to make discovery, to express a new thought, to build, to partake of the process of creation. The sanctity of personal dignity would seem to be associated with this quality of humanity. Our form of government and way of life is predicated upon its primacy. The deadly struggle in the opposing worlds of communistic versus democratic institutions is formed along this line, an ultimate and unrelenting contest for vindication of the state or the people within the state. It is a personal belief that Western society shall succeed or fail in this endeavor in direct proportion to the degree we are validly dedicated to a defense of individual dignity. The growing and spreading awareness of individuality is a product of democracy. The world is in ferment for the reason that the concepts of individualism are growing deeper and stronger. Democracy would thus appear to be working.

Frustration and Revolt

Violence is a product of fear, a rage of retaliation, and would seem an almost inevitable by-

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product of the massive changes which are in progress. Today's violence, certainly to a substantial degree, is an expression of frustration and revolt against the absence of a viable ethic as such. Our young are dissatisfied with the standards of their leaders and parents. Cynicism and hypocrisy in high place is widespread and is provoking wide revulsion. Decision by expediency is the order of the day and dominates the thinking of both business and government. Like short-term credit, its effect as a palliative is short-lived and each cycle of crises is more acute than the preceding one. Perhaps, an excess emphasis on material possessions is partially responsible. The struggle for personal achievement strips men of their more gracious qualities. Survival in the market place is intolerant of charity, in the same manner that nature ordains the survival of the fittest. In the contests of life, this law breeds competence and harshness even though legal and social concepts of humanitarianism restrict its unbridled application.

Suppression of violence may be necessary but is not a cure. The antidote for violence is constructive endeavor that imparts a sense of fulfillment. Violence cannot flourish among those who have learned to build. The effect on the person is beneficial whatever one is building, whether it be knowledge, skills, or things. In the process, one absorbs a sense of affinity with the Infinite. Time and materials are mystically converted into a product, or a skill. Individual effort is converted into products and becomes a part of the universe of creation in the comparable sense that energy is mystically mutated into matter. "I exist; therefore, I am" expands into "I do; therefore, I am more."

Heroes or Idols?

Hero worship plays a vital part in the character formation of our youth. The search for standards becomes personalized in a form of idol worship. A Lincoln, a Kennedy, a Christ, or a Machiavelli is deified as an encoded model. We cannot thus delegate the formation of ourselves to another. Each must shoulder his own burden for shaping his mind. Men are not to be hallowed or enshrined, admirable as their qualities may be. Their acts and deeds can only provide guidelines for study.

One must look inward to develop one's own standards. Heroes and idols are a source of inspiration but their deification carries the danger of disillusionment. The repercussions from the de-Stalinization of the Soviet Union, for example, posed a serious threat to

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the continuing effectiveness of communist ideology, and it has manifestly weakened "strict communism." Every rational mind can seek for itself those principles which are enduring and satisfying, provided, of course, one first believes in the existence of such principles. There is no proof that such rules exist which can be offered to the skeptic. But it is repugnant to consciousness to believe that man, apparently the only rational creature, would be left without guidance and left to act upon his own resources while placing him in an environment completely controlled by immutable laws of nature.

Principles of Consistency

The search for knowledge assumes the existence of principles of consistency which can be discovered and implemented. One is thus confronted with the need of accepting the concept of universal order as embracing human behavior. Man's essence and being are matters of relation to the persons, things, and creatures around him which we describe as environment. Acceptance of this concept is almost inescapable. It would seem that even the most arrogant and materialistic of minds must eventually sense our status of dependency on the immutability of universal law. Obviously, the attitude with which one accepts such concept varies widely. Rational acknowledgment of a universal order would seem a contributing factor to personal stability. Without such a belief man has no way to locate or identify himself and he is lost, a creature tossed and buffeted by the vicissitudes of life, without meaning or direction.

In a subjective sense, "virtue is its own reward." "To thine own self be true" is an inspiring motivant. But objectively, a moral code must be bulwarked by the concept of retribution. In spite of denial, mortals must eventually succumb to an apprehension of retribution. The unknown, by reason of being unknown, is an affliction of all, and potentially carries the threat of being capable of producing a retaliatory force. Belief in retribution is an expression of submission to cosmic forces. Personal tranquillity is related to one's belief in the omnipotence of such forces and their impact on mortals. Newton's law of motion provides, "to every force there is an equal and opposite reaction." In finances, credits are balanced by debits. In a chemical reaction, "the initial mass of the reactants is equal to the final mass of the products." In jurisprudence, every right is balanced by a duty. Justice, to be psychically satisfying, must administer punishment. It must

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not only hold the transgressor to account, but it also rewards the compliant. Justice is thus measured not only by the quantum and nature of punishment imposed on the culprit; it must also cause the conformist to feel his position is ultimately improved by his obedience.

The Rule of Law

In a society that fetishly declaims the rule of law, the enforcement of law would seem to be an obvious objective. Law is a product of moral concepts, and ideas of right and wrong provide the genesis of legislation. Statutes are specifications of ethical concepts and, with all their infirmities, are still our best effort to capture rules in harmony with infinite law. It is this which makes sacred the "rule of law" as opposed to the "rule of men." Principle is intended to take precedence over persons.

One may wonder why criminals are treated with such laxity. Could it not be that the enforcers are themselves so lost as not to know what to enforce? Such laxity is symptomatic of the general breakdown of imposed retribution. In the home, the child frequently dominates the parent. The intelligent, but confused, parent has lost a conviction of right and wrong. "Progressive" psychology has inhibited normal and natural punishment and thereby deprived the child of the cleansing sense of suffering a just retribution. The Puritan philosophy, even with its harshness, was highly positivistic and provided certainty for coping with life's problems. Indulgence and coddling are breeding neuroses in children who are otherwise normal and healthy. Parents should learn that love and respect are poured from the same pot. Withholding proper punishment, under the unfounded fear of losing the child's love, eventually causes a loss of both love and respect. In time, the harvest reaped is disobedience, rebellion, and contempt. The errant child must surely call to account the conscience of the parents with the persisting question of wherein they failed.

Survival and Retribution in the World of Business

There is one area in which the natural laws of survival of the fittest and retribution have heretofore been allowed to operate with some degree of freedom. This is in the business world of free enterprise whereby the penalty for violating the rules of good management inexorably brings insolvency with final dissolution of the business.

Under the influence of socialistic and Fabian doctrines, our govern-

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ment seems possessed by some mania to destroy this last stronghold of freedom that has heretofore been allowed to operate to our advantage. The subsidy, the special tax advantage, government management of business, and other artificial restraints on the economy are violating natural law and are manifestly dangerous to a healthy economy. Their use should be indulged with reluctance and restraint. They are doubly iniquitous when they constitute a forced charity procured by political influence and distributed as a dole to an undeserved member who in turn can control his own dispensation. The present plight of the British Empire should provide ample lesson of the effects of socialization of government with its related restrictions on free enterprise. It is no secret that the communist countries have repeatedly needed help from the "free world" to avoid widespread starvation.

In summary then, what conclusions can be drawn? Essentially, that we are unhappy passengers in an era of unparalleled transition. The impact is too great for historical comparison. The need for individual stamina and stability was never greater. If man cannot live by bread alone, he will surely forge new standards to carry himself into the future. The current fetish of supinely subscribing to the idea that modern complexity defies solution is thwarting our better capabilities. An intense search for more fundamental guidelines in lieu of shallow expedients will hasten our progress to better and more enduring answers to many problems, both personal and national. The cradle of civilization of ancient Greece gave us a great assist, two thousand years ago, with a simple phrase, "Know thyself." Today, as then, this message is suggesting that we refortify ourselves with an enhanced sense of our endowed capabilities. ◈

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Truth and Faith Endure

WITH EACH WINTER SOLSTICE since the proud days of Imperial Rome the age-old legend of the nativity reminds us of the endless resurgence of the soul beneath the burden and the suffering perennially imposed upon mankind by those who seek to master it by some demented dream of might and glory, or some empty promise of peace and plenty without price. . . . By this ancient symbol of the silent strength of the unnumbered humble and obscure we may remember always that only truth and faith will endure.

VIRGIL JORDAN

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"BORN FREE"?

E. F. WELLS

DURING a Fritz Kreisler concert, a young violinist sat enthralled. "Ohh," she sighed, "what I would give to have such finger dexterity, such mastery, such freedom!" Later she told the incomparable Kreisler that she would give her life to play as he did. The violinist looked at her compassionately, then said, "But, my dear, I *did*."

Soaring, unbound by the chains of gravity, Nijinsky, the world's greatest dancer, expressed the ultimate of personal freedom. Yet before he could abandon himself to the dance, Nijinsky had to curtail, deny, restrict. Only through the strictest of discipline could a man gain such freedom of movement.

Mr. Wells has been an educator and currently is a free-lance writer and supervisory training consultant.

Nijinsky's tragedy was that, having gained the ultimate in freedom, he destroyed himself by giving in to indulgences that tore his moral fiber, until the freest of mortals passed the latter part of his life confined to the narrowest of worlds.

"A good poem is not made," said Robert Frost. "It is born — complete." Surely this would be freedom — to think in a rush of words so perfect that, when the thought finished, it would be poetry. But before this can be achieved, a mind must be disciplined as Nijinsky's body was disciplined, as Kreisler's hands were disciplined. No poem is ever born complete to the mind that has not carefully trained itself. Knowingly or unknowingly, through countless attempts, the

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poet has disciplined his thoughts to flow in rhythmical, striking patterns. He has prepared his mind for the moment of inspiration, and the harder he works, the more gloriously his mind can soar.

A man who has not disciplined himself to read has narrowed his freedom to choose between ideas. He is confined to what he hears. He is at the mercy of the propagandists. He has limited his freedom to think. "I thought I'd been freed from jail," said a young friend, "when I quit school. But now I know a drop-out has no freedom of choice in the job market."

Self-Discipline an Essential First Step to Freedom

Nineteen-hundred years ago, Epictetus recognized the paradox. "No man is free," wrote that wise Greek, "who is not master of himself." The struggle for self-mastery is the great battle of life. Yet how often modern man thinks of freedom as a state of total unrestraint. Young men and women, eager to be free, confuse unbridled passion with freedom, and so become a slave to passion. Anxious to live unrestricted, they rush to experience all things and fall pitiful victims to their vices. They are chained as no prisoner is.

Recent campus demonstrations showed that the first loss under unrestrained anarchy is a man's freedom. When a meeting is in a state of uproar, no one can be heard. When a handful of students riot, the rights of all students are abused. After the Berkeley movement, begun with sincere idealism, degenerated into license, one student said, "In the future when I defend to the death anyone's right to be heard, I'm going to make sure he's not trying to muzzle mine."

As long as he is compelled to denounce, to defy, to violate, the young rebel cannot choose; he can only discard or destroy. Scorning all he sees, he denies himself the heritage of the ages. He mistakes lack of responsibility for freedom, crassness for honesty, and the ability to shock or astound for talent.

Called down for unseemly conduct, a contemptuous young medic said to television's Dr. Kildare, "What you're asking of me is *conformity!*"

"No," replied Dr. Kildare. "What I'm asking of you is professional conduct."

The young need to be taught that subtle distinction. In a free society it is possible – yes, it is necessary – to fight for what one believes. But it is meaningless to talk of civil rights without recognizing civil responsibilities. A free society has the right to ex-

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pect its citizens to act as responsible adults. In fact, its very continuance depends upon it.

Freedom from Responsibility

Writing of the decline of Athens, historian Edith Hamilton said, "When the freedom they wished for most was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free and was never free again."

Often the freedom to think and the freedom to indulge are enemies, as history has shown in the decadence of Rome, in the vanished glory of Babylon. The once brilliant mind of Henry VIII was dissipated by pandering to whims, until a gouty king no longer had the freedom of will to deny himself anything. A man who cannot deny himself, *cannot choose*. Wishes often conflict and the beginning of wisdom is the realization that short-range desires must often be sacrificed for long-range dreams.

Our forefathers who prized freedom above all else were not unbridled men. They did not revolt merely for the sake of rebellion. They recognized that breaking old chains was not enough. If a man was to rebel, it must be for the sake of some mightier aim. They knew that the value of freedom lies in what men do with it.

"I have on my table," said the Nobel Prize-winning poet, Sir Rabindranath Tagore, "a violin string. It is free. I twist one end of it and it responds. It is free. But it is not free to do what a violin string is supposed to do — to produce music. So I take it, fix it in my violin and tighten it until it is taut. Only then is it *free* to be a violin string." Each of us is free to choose if he wishes to be an unhampered piece of catgut or a free and performing violin string — adding to the world's waste or the world's music.

"Even if you live in the freest country in the world," wrote Ignazio Silone in *Bread and Wine* "and are lazy, callous, apathetic, irressolute, you are not free but a slave, though there be no coercion and no opposition." No man is born free; it is enough that he lives in a country where he *can become* free. This is his American birthright, this, his opportunity.

Such an opportunity ought not to be squandered. It ought to be fulfilled by everyone through his own patient and dedicated labors, for if it is not cherished and won anew by each succeeding generation, so splendid a birthright could be lost. ◈

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ZONING

A CASE STUDY

JOHN J. ROBERTS

Zoning has spread itself across the nation since first tried in New York City in 1916. This study of its growth and effect in one community may help to reveal its general nature. The author is a reporter for *The Emporia Gazette* in Kansas, and the affairs of the zoning board have been on his "beat."

THE NATURE of government bears a strong resemblance, it has been said, to that of Topsy: it just grows and grows. This should be no mystery: when government expands beyond its legitimate areas of protection of life and property rights, it cannot fulfill these additional functions as efficiently as can the free market; when the inevitable problems then arise, the same mentality which urged government intervention in the first place can conceive of no cure but more of the same medicine. More government is called for to cure the ravages caused by misdirected government in the first place. A vicious cycle is started, the closest thing to perpetual motion yet devised by man.

This malignant growth is clearly visible in the history of Emporia's zoning experience. The town's first zoning ordinance was passed in 1927. That ordinance provided for three zoning classifications — one-family residential, apartment residential, and commercial — and for a three-man board to administer the ordinance. The zoning board now has nine members, not three, administering a complex set of zoning ordinances with nineteen different classifications, not three; and since 1953 zoning has applied to the county area around Emporia as well as to the town itself.

Another index to the Topsy nature of government zoning in Emporia is revealed in its history

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of comprehensive planning. The acceptance of zoning led naturally to the further approval of comprehensive planning, with zoning as only one phase of the total picture. The first master plan for Emporia was approved in 1941, fourteen years after the introduction of zoning.

That plan was soon declared obsolete and, at least in part, impractical. As a result, those who had pushed for zoning and a comprehensive plan now urged – of course – another master plan. A major fight developed over which city-planning firm should get the lucrative contract, however, and the new master plan was not presented to the City until 1966. Its cost was more than twice that of the first plan, and the book containing the new plan comprised 220 pages, 27 maps, 11 figures, and 37 tables. Not bad, for a town of only 20,000 inhabitants!

Decision-Making Transferred

This gradual but thorough transfer of owner decision-making to a political planning board was not accomplished without incidents, and some of these provide explicit illustrations of further theoretical fallacies in zoning.

The most recent classification to be added to the zoning regulations was passed earlier this year, and immediately exploded into a petty but bitter squabble whether package liquor stores should be included among the some 120 different businesses explicitly allowed under the new classification.

Such arguments are nothing new under the sun. Almost immediately after the first zoning ordinance in Emporia was passed, a large corner lot owned by the local sheriff touched off a veritable comedy of errors.

Property owners in the neighborhood held that the lot should be zoned one-family residence while the mayor and his associates at City Hall said the proper zoning was commercial. The spat came to a head one fine morning when the irate property owners marched on City Hall for a heated confrontation with the mayor. While this was transpiring, however, the sheriff was over at the court house filing papers which clearly placed his property in the third classification, apartment district.

A favorite justification for zoning is the claim that it provides stability. Beyond its legitimate functions, however, the state brings anything but stability.

One of the manifestations of such instability comes in the form of spot-zoning. Edward M. Bassett wrote in 1936 that the pioneer New York zoning ordinance (1916) never could have been passed

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without requirement in the enabling act for uniform application of the restrictions within a district. This rule of uniform treatment soon fell by the wayside in New York; in Emporia, spot-zoning by the planning board and by the appeals board began almost immediately after the local ordinance was approved.

Instability by Compulsion

The nonadherence to uniform standards obviously introduces an element of instability. Other contributing factors also are involved. Emporia is a two-college town, and until a few years ago was drastically short of student housing. The zoning board decided to help relieve the problem by using its powers to encourage property owners to provide student apartments. But in December of 1966, the zoning board and the district court jointly began cracking down on zoning violations involving too many student roomers in houses. The same property owners who earlier had cooperated with the zoning board now were penalized for having cooperated.

This example of capricious government illustrates an even more important maxim: The essence of government is coercion. The *sine qua non* for coercion, of course, is power; and nearly everyone is familiar with Lord Acton's dictum on the tendency of power to corrupt. Behind-the-scenes political jockeying is a major cause of zoning instability, if for no other reason than its sweeping pervasiveness.

Home owners who believe that they are protected by zoning frequently are stunned to find classifications changed, apparently to accommodate those who know the "right" people in the "right" places.

This coercion can be merely irritating. One Emporia man could not get clear title for several months to a house he had purchased, because a legal survey found that the building extended a couple of inches into a six-foot buffer area stipulated by zoning law between the house and the property line.

Star Chamber Tactics

The more dangerous aspects of power misdirected were bared in 1961 when the zoning board in Emporia adopted Star Chamber tactics. The planners began holding closed sessions, which they justified publicly as an effort to avoid offending property owners in areas under consideration. The next step, which followed soon after, was refusal to divulge how individual board members voted. When the City Commission then asked the zoning board to report

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"some indication" of the votes cast, the planners approved a resolution calling the City Commission "out of order."

Lord Acton could hardly have wanted more clear-cut confirmation of his thesis. Unfortunately, the history of zoning in Emporia bears yet further witness.

A proposal for a zoning change to allow construction of a new professional building, for instance, stirred up nearly unanimous neighborhood opposition in 1964. The chairman of the zoning board vigorously supported the proposed rezoning, however. For two years the argument dragged on. Every time the matter was placed on the zoning board agenda, large groups of protesters trooped to the hearing; finally, the matter was brought up one evening without earlier notice, and under the whip of the zoning board chairman was approved. No one seemed very surprised when the construction firm owned by the chairman received the contract for constructing the new building.

Nor was that an isolated case. Later that same year, seventy-six Emporia property owners presented a petition to the City Commission charging that the planning board had shown favoritism to another local construction company on no less than seven different apartment projects. The mayor rejected the petition but admitted that the ordinances had been interpreted "in different ways to meet specific needs."

The New Shopping Center

The most blatant example of misuse of zoning authority in Emporia concerned a major shopping center development on the edge of the town. The plans were announced in early 1966 by an outside firm. The developers went to the planning board for a zoning change, and were refused, partly on grounds that the town was not large enough for a shopping center. Obviously, this would have been one of the first concerns of the developers, and they had determined that the demand was sufficient to bring them a profit with their shopping center. Competition was the real objection, of course.

The battlefields included the City Commission, the County Commission, and the district court, as well as the planning board, and finally split the entire town. One key issue in the next election was whether to allow the shopping center; the people elected new city and county commissions, which in turn appointed a new planning board, more favorably disposed toward the shopping center.

During the prolonged struggle, however, the old planning board

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had been approving several rezoning requests to allow neighborhood shopping centers by local developers. The upshot of this maneuvering is that although the original shopping center developers finally have obtained their green light, the smaller centers constructed in the meantime probably have destroyed the current feasibility of the large project.

The Planner's Inflexibility

Even when the power of the planning board is used for benevolent purposes, the results often are mischievous. When framing the original zoning ordinance for Emporia in 1927, the planners thought they were being considerate in restricting the business district along the main thoroughfare to protect residential property. Immediately after publication of the zoning, however, a dozen irate property owners informed the planners that they did not want such protection – they preferred being in the "business" district.

Zoning ordinances prescribe monotonous uniformity to large districts of land, each lot of which is unique. When planners admit this fact of uniqueness, they face a new quandary: how to inject flexibility without utterly shattering the façade of uniform rules. When the planners attempt to encourage the necessary diversity, through such techniques as spot-zoning, they are in effect admitting the failure of zoning itself.

Moreover, they open an additional Pandora's box, for the artificial flexibility and imitation diversity of a collective planning board decree will never match the productive fruits and natural responses to market conditions provided by thousands of continuing individual land-use decisions by all of the individual property owners.

In determining the use of each piece of land in an entire community, planners are further unqualified by their limited liability. Sole responsibility for an individual's decisions leads to careful consideration of the probable consequences involved. If the decision is economically wise, the profits will go to that individual; on the other hand, if the decision is wrong, he alone will suffer for his error. These two factors lead to the most responsible kind of decisions. Responsibility breeds wise economic judgments; irresponsibility begets haphazard decisions.

Planners are not bound by such responsibility; as appointees, they are not even directly answerable to the electorate. Too often, their judgment is clouded by adherence to such fictional will-o'-the-wisps as "the greatest good" or "the best use for the community as a whole." If their decision is wise,

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they do not profit directly; and if their conclusion is unwise, the entire community suffers for their mistake, although the blame usually falls upon the owners and managers rather than upon the planners.

Even the decisions made by the property owners themselves are hamstrung by government interference in the form of zoning regulations. This intervention reduces them to the status of property owners with only partial ownership rights because their range of choice is limited to that allowed by government.

This points up another crucial fact about zoning: it becomes effective *only* when it prevents the owner from implementing a decision which he has reached after the full exploration of consequences that responsibility entails. If his analysis of market conditions indicates a given land-use, and that land-use is allowed by the zoning regulations, the regulations are of no effect. It is when that particular land-use is prohibited by the zoning regulations that they become effective. Zoning thus thwarts economic use and insures waste of scarce resources.

The Immorality of Zoning

The fundamental objection to zoning, however, is moral. Theft may be defined as a reduction, without the owner's consent, of an owner's right to his property. Zoning, by definition, is an interference with the right of ownership. If the majority of the people accept theft, that may make theft democratically "respectable," but it does not make it morally just, nor does it cancel the effects of immorality.

One of the effects of making a little theft "respectable" is that the line cannot be held there. When zoning first came to Emporia, it would have been unthinkable for one person to attempt to restrict his neighbor's right to his own property without going beyond the pale of the law.

Now, whenever a zoning change is contemplated, a public hearing is scheduled, letters are mailed to those persons living in and adjacent to the affected property, and these neighbors then may legally testify in favor of or in opposition to the proposed land-use. It is appalling how many people take this opportunity to help determine how their neighbors' property is to be used.

The most common wail at such hearings is, "We were assured when we bought that the zoning would remain the same." This is an indictment, first, of the speaker: He placed his trust in zoning — government intervention — because he did not want to have to

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keep up with changing market conditions. When faith is put in false gods, the believer need not be surprised to find himself elsewhere than in heaven.

But that wail also is an indictment of government intervention. Zoning encourages men to think of their decisions as "safe." Apart from the unnatural intervention, this false sense of security has other stultifying effects: It leads the property owner to ignore the significance of those changing economic conditions which enhance his investment; and conversely it leads him to ignore those circumstances which damage his investment. In either case, the result must be a certain mismanagement or partial waste of his resources; and the loss extends beyond him, although he is hit hardest.

All men are subject to influences beyond individual control; sound economic management seeks to keep abreast of such changes and to mold them to the individual's benefit. No government can protect a person against his own negligence or poor management — regardless of the promises made.

Zoning, then, encourages the individual to relax his vigilance in following changing market conditions, through a false sense of security. The zoning philosophy further encourages the individual to clamor for more government intervention to shore up his artificial "protection" and to prevent the exercise of the entrepreneur's ownership rights.

Prelude to Urban Renewal

Finally, there is no doubt that zoning helps prepare the way for that greater evil, Federal urban renewal. Three years ago, urban renewal nearly came to Emporia. The attempt failed only because copies of the preliminary plans were obtained and published by the press, with the result that an *ad hoc* organization of property owners carried petitions to force an election in which urban renewal was shut out of Emporia for a ten-year period.

Urban renewal never would have been considered in Emporia if zoning had not already worn down the resistance to such legalized theft. The zoning philosophy, with its subtle undermining of private ownership and its encouragement of government suzerainty, erodes the safeguards against more pervasive central planning schemes such as Federal urban renewal. The temptations to corruption and the possibilities for misuse of government power are infinitely greater under urban renewal than with zoning, of course.

Zoning, consistently adhered to, leads not only to Federal urban renewal but ultimately to cen-

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tralized world government. If the use of one lot of land may be determined by government fiat, why should planning be restricted to one district or to one community? Indeed, why should coercive planning be limited to massive urban renewal projects? Why not government planning for the entire nation? The world?

The constitutionality of zoning was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in the Euclid, Ohio, Case in 1926, although the court admitted that zoning regulations "a century ago, or even half a century ago, probably would have been rejected as arbitrary and oppressive." The decision came on an appeal from the village of Euclid, a suburb of Cleveland, where the district court had, upon complaint of a real estate company, thrown out the entire zoning ordinance of Euclid as taking property without due process of law.

The high court's justification of its decision – three justices dissented, by the way – is quite interesting.

"Until recent years urban life was comparatively simple," the opinion stated, "but with the great increase and concentration of property, problems have developed and constantly are developing, which require, and will continue to require, additional restrictions in respect of the use and occupation of private lands in urban communities."

This is simply the cliché that an increasingly complex society requires increasingly complex government. Actually, if society is becoming more complex, that is sufficient reason in itself for less government, not more. Men can govern only in proportion as they can fully and responsibly comprehend that which they govern; and the more complex that which they govern becomes, the less fully can they comprehend it and the less responsible they are in their government of it.

The Supreme Court justified zoning with the utopian promise that such planning "will increase the safety and security of home life, greatly tend to prevent street accidents, especially to children, by reducing the traffic and resulting confusion in residential sections, decrease noise and other conditions which produce or intensify nervous disorders, preserve a more favorable environment in which to rear children, etc."

In the four decades since that decision, the arguments mustered in favor of zoning have grown somewhat more sophisticated, but basically remain just as emotional, ill-considered, and indefensible. The free market stands as the only alternative. ◈

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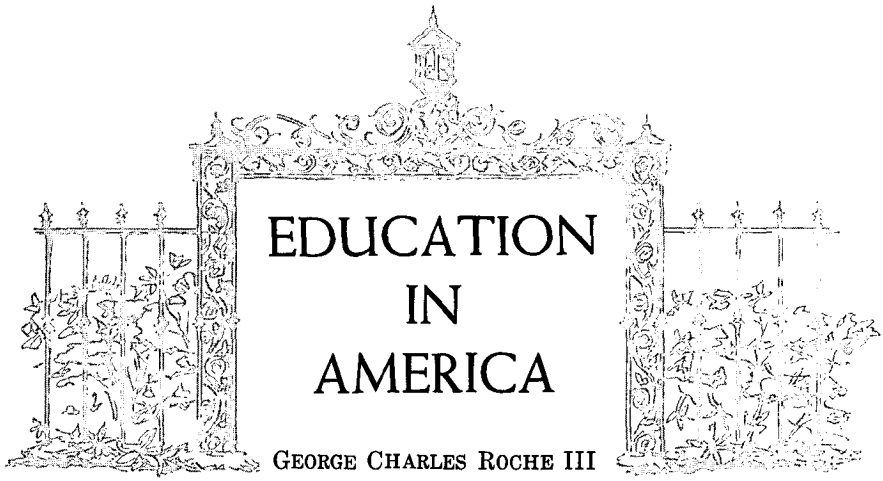

EDUCATION IN AMERICA

GEORGE CHARLES ROCHE III

3. *Scientism and the Collapse of Standards*

IF THE IDEAL of an educational system is to give children a sense of their individuality and a sense of proper values, the next question arises: "How well is our present educational system fulfilling these fundamental tasks?" The answer is far from encouraging.

Our modern "system" seems bent upon violating freedom (thus denying the concept of the individual) while also violating the framework of values within which the individual exercises his freedom (thus denying the concept of a transcendent reality). True education as we defined it earlier, based upon the individual's freedom to choose and upon a meaningful moral framework within which the individual makes his choices, thus becomes doubly impossible of achievement.

As science and technology have performed their wonders in material achievements, it has been easy to dismiss moral questions (and those who deal with such questions) as unimportant since they apparently do not contribute to "Progress." Such a view has been so largely accepted in our time that the validity of the whole moral framework has been called into question. We seem to have reached a point in our society

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where science and technology have so advanced our material fortunes that we feel we need look no further for guidance or salvation.

Such scientistic values have played a larger and larger role in our modern educational processes. Let me hasten to draw the distinction between the scientistic and the scientific outlook. Man's pursuit of an improved understanding of his material world is an important and legitimate *scientific* activity, an activity of prime interest to all inquiring minds who have lived on this earth. *Scientism*, the assumption that modern man may now find *all* his values in science, to the exclusion of any other guideline, is a totally different concept, a concept peculiar to our materialistic times. One of the men perceiving this tendency was the late Mahatma Gandhi:

> Modern education tends to turn our eyes away from the Spirit. The possibilities of the spirit-force therefore do not appeal to us and our eyes become riveted on the evanescent, transistory and material force.

The modern barbarian produced by such scientistic educational attitudes remains blind to a lesson learned long ago and transmitted from one generation to the next in all civilized communities: The world in which man finds himself can be understood only if he turns at least in part to abstractions that go beyond the merely material. The man who perceives the presence of *only* the material soon finds *himself* indistinguishable from the stones around him.

The Authoritarian Type, Determined to Manipulate Society

As our technological civilization advances further and further in its study of *things* as a substitute for the study of men and their ideas, a new sort of personality comes to occupy the center stage. This new personality sees the entire universe and all its components, individuals included, as portions of a great machine which can be manipulated according to preconceived notions. Men who thus begin to fancy themselves qualified to serve as manipulators of others, men who feel bound by no higher authority, become narrow and bigoted.

Cardinal Newman described such a man in the middle of the last century:

> The various busy world, spread out before our eyes, is physical, but it is more than physical; and, in making its actual system identical with his scientific analysis, such a Professor as I have imagined was betraying a want of a philosophical depth, and an ignorance of what a University Teacher ought to be. He was no longer a teacher of liberal

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knowledge, but a narrow-minded bigot.

Such bigots are poor judges of what constitutes a decent educational framework. They are likely to assume that man is no more than the final result of the forces acting upon him. This leaves no room for personality, individuality, or free will. Once such a view of the individual is adopted, the idea that men can be manipulated for social goals never lags far behind.

Thus, we come to accept a startlingly new concept of education.

> Perhaps it is still premature to predict that we will, within the next generation, be able to produce, through drugs or manipulation of the environment, very significant changes in memory and learning capacity of children and even adults. Nonetheless, the current research with mice indicates that such things are theoretically possible, and it is therefore not too early to begin to discuss the social and philosophical problems that such possibilities will generate.[1]
>
> Both the biochemist and the teacher of the future will combine their skills and insights for the educational and intellectual development of the child. Tommy needs a bit more of an immediate memory stimulator; Jack could do with a chemical attention-span stretcher; Rachel needs an anticholinestrase to slow down her mental processes; Joan, some puromycin – she remembers too many details, and gets lost.
>
> To be sure, all our data thus far comes from the brains of goldfish and rodents. But is anyone so certain that the chemistry of the brain of a rat (which, after all, is a fairly complex mammal) is so different from that of the brain of a human being that he dare neglect this challenge – or even gamble – when the stakes are so high?[2]

Make Others in Their Image

It seems that man is not to be exempt from the new manipulators. In that same issue of *Saturday Review*, Joseph Wood Krutch reported a speech by a professor of biophysics:

> Robert Sinsheiner, professor of biophysics at Cal Tech, . . . declared before his institution's 75th anniversary conference that the scientist has now in effect become both Nature with a capital N and God with a capital G. Until today, he stated, prophecy has been a very chancy business, but now that science has become "the prime mover of change," it is not unreasonable to hope that the race of prophets employing its methods may have become reliable.

[1] Peter Schrag, "Education in America," *Saturday Review*, Jan. 20, 1968, p. 45.

[2] David Krech, "The Chemistry of Learning," *Saturday Review*, Jan. 20, 1968, p. 68.

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Science has now proved beyond question that there is no qualitative difference between the animate and the inanimate, and though we don't yet know exactly how the inanimate becomes conscious, there is every reason to believe that we will soon be rid of that bothersome mystery also. "It has become increasingly clear," Professor Sinsheiner said, "that all the properties of life can be understood to be simply inherent in the material properties of the complex molecule which comprises the cell." Already we make proteins; soon we will make viruses, and then living cells – which will be, as he calls it, "the second Genesis."

What better examples could be given of the scientistic hubris which today dominates so much of our thinking? We are being confronted with Faust's bargain—give up our souls and gain power in return.

Traditionally, education has not been concerned so exclusively with the mere manipulation of the individual. The teacher found himself within a framework of values, within a situation faced in common by all men. To teach, therefore, did not mean to manipulate the young into some "socially acceptable" pattern. Instead, teaching meant sharing with the student the mystery of being human. Today's scientistic approach promises to do away with the human condition entirely, putting its own goals and means in place of the individual human being and his feelings, aspirations, and qualifications. C. S. Lewis has predicted that such a change in our educational and social philosophy is a move toward "the abolition of man."

The Transcendent Order

The story is told that one of our leading physicists concerned with nuclear projects spied a turtle one day while taking a walk with a friend. Thinking he might take it home to his family, he picked it up and carried it with him for a few steps. Suddenly, he stopped, retraced his steps, and, as nearly as possible, replaced the turtle where he had first discovered it.

"Why did you do that?" his friend asked.

The reply: "It just struck me that perhaps, for one man, I have tampered enough with the universe."

It is a sobering thought. There are signs that our power over nature may become uncontrollable. The size, complexity, and uncertainty of the choices available to us might become so great that no one is qualified to make those choices. Could it be that each time we apparently subdue a part of the natural order, we merely cause a dislocation of natural processes

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which will return to haunt us in a new form? Could it be that our polluted atmosphere and our polluted water are symbols of an ecological equation in which nature herself will have the last laugh? Could it be that man, in his denial of a higher power than science, threatens to destroy himself?

Is it possible that the end result of scientism will be the destruction of all values, including the very human beings who hold those values? Man's search for meaning in his life has always centered on discovery of a higher truth, something even more certain than his existence as an individual. It is the denial of any possible higher reality that finally leads scientism to deny the individual as well. Some modern men have perceived this necessary connection between the identity of the individual and the existence of a higher reality. One such flash of insight was granted to the playwright Eugene O'Neill:

> Most modern plays are concerned with the relation between man and man, but that does not interest me at all. I am interested only in the relation between man and God. Anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects, or he is simply scribbling around on the surface of things.

We have been "scribbling around on the surface of things" and wondering what was happening to our civilization. We have been try- to get along without God and attempting to put society, scientism, and political manipulation in his place. We may yet discover that despite television, air conditioning, and all the other trappings of modern material civilization, man cannot survive such self-idolatry. In our attempt, we are, in George Schuyler's phrase, "like a colony of ants riding on the end of a log floating down the Mississippi, while discussing destiny."

If we have no values to transmit to our young, we need not be surprised that we live in an increasingly valueless age.

The Academy and the Collapse of Values

Nowhere is the collapse of values which plagues our educational community and our society more apparent than in the academy. That we live in an age of tremendous activity may be but a sign of decay. As Ortega y Gasset has commented, "In the world today a great thing is dying; it is truth. Without a certain margin of tranquillity, truth succumbs."

Perhaps the reason for all the "sound and fury, signifying nothing" is that somehow we have lost our common sense and sub-

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stituted a total intellectual anarchy in its place. Man has never been more problematic to himself than in modern times. We no longer seem to know what we are; and the growing body of scientific thought engaged in the study of man seems to do far more to confuse than to clarify the problem for us. Never have we possessed more facts, but never have we suffered such a poverty of insight into the human condition. Thus, we seem to run faster and faster in pursuit of a progressively more illusive truth. Indeed, many people have given up the search entirely, and today regard truth and the meaning of life as "metaphysical" concepts, insisting that really "significant" scientific investigation must center on the mere gathering of information.

And what information we have been gathering! The isolation produced by the jargon of the various disciplines, each busy gathering facts quite apart from any higher standard of truth, has often rendered the work of these specialists unintelligible to one another or to the society of which they are a part. Indeed, any unified view of culture is totally unattainable for the modern scientistic mentality. Unity implies standards; standards imply a scale of values which can be universally applied. When scientism promises to provide us with constantly new "facts," supposedly implying a constantly changing world view, such an empirical paradise can hardly accommodate itself to immutable values. Finally, the fact chasers must reject the concept of value altogether.

Those who would abandon all the old standards of good, those who would condition the human race to accept their new system, are faced with a terrible dilemma. If the conditioners have no fixed standards of their own, what standards can they inculcate in the human raw material they control? The blind are leading the blind.

If we can indeed "see through" first principles, if we can "see through" everything and anything, then everything and anything must be transparent. C. S. Lewis has reminded us that a wholly transparent world is an invisible world, and to "see through" all things is finally the same as not to see at all.

A patron saint of the intellectual climate of twentieth century America was J. Allen Smith (originator of the "debunking" view of the Founding Fathers and the United States Constitution, later made famous by Charles Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*). Smith, in a moment of reflection, apparently had

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misgivings about the course of events: "The trouble with us reformers is that we made reform a crusade against standards. Well, we smashed them all, and now neither we nor anyone else have anything left."

Nothing left! Strong words, coming from a prophet of the modern academy. If Smith was right, if standards are all smashed, then to what can we turn in educating our young people?

What Is the Truth?

This failure of standards within the modern academy can be easily demonstrated. One of the foremost students of St. Thomas Aquinas, Professor Josef Pieper, gives graphic illustration:

> The medieval philosophers, in studying Aristotle and Plato, wished to know all those things and only those things which were true. Where the truths of these philosophers were not complete, they asked themselves how to complete them.
>
> There is an enormous difference between this attitude and that usually held nowadays and which we consider the sole possible and responsible attitude toward "sources." For the student especially, that difference is of vital importance. Anyone who asks Thomas his opinion receives a reply which makes perfectly clear what he, Thomas, considers to be the truth – even when his reply is couched in the form of a quotation from Aristotle. But if we are asked our opinion, we reply with historically documented quotations which may reveal a good many things – for example, how widely read we are – but fail to reveal one thing alone; what we ourselves hold to be the truth.[3]

Such a tendency is painfully apparent in modern philosophy. One of the latest "isms" to catch the fancy of modern philosophers is structuralism. Dr. Michel Foucault, for example, insists that each thinker can be no more than the point of condensation and articulation of the total thought structure, within which he finds his place. The philosopher, then, can possess no original insight into the nature of things. Instead, he reclassifies thoughts and words according to the thought processes within his civilization. It is this total social process which gives man his structure. For the structuralist, man without this social structure would be "a mere figure in the sand whose forms are washed away by the sea."

Such totally valueless thought processes are increasingly typical of the age in which we live. Indeed, we might ask the structuralists one question. If a philosopher's insight is no more than a series of essentially meaningless

[3] Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, p. 52.

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shufflings and reshufflings of previous words and values, why should the thinking of the structuralist himself present any exception to the rule? But to deal in these terms is to play their game, admitting that all is ultimately pointless and meaningless and without direction. Our very conversation with one another comes to mean less and less until it finally means nothing. Ortega quotes a seventeenth century satirist who put his finger squarely on the final results of such thinking:

> The Creator made everything out of nothing,
> This one [man] nothing out of everything, and in conclusion,
> The one made the world and the other has destroyed it.

An Age Without Roots

How, then, shall we characterize our age?

Our age is characterised by the strange presumption that it is superior to all past time; more than that, by its leaving out of consideration all that is past, by recognising no classical or normative epochs, by looking on itself as a new life superior to all previous forms and irreducible to them. I doubt if our age can be understood without keeping firm hold on this observation, for that is precisely its special problem. If it felt that it was decadent, it would look on other ages as superior to itself, which would be equivalent to esteeming and admiring them and venerating the principles by which they were inspired. Our age would then have clear and firmly held ideals, even if incapable of realising them. But the truth is exactly the contrary; we live at a time when man believes himself fabulously capable of creation, but he does not know what to create. Lord of all things, he is not lord of himself. He feels lost amid his own abundance. With more means at its disposal, more knowledge, more technique than ever, it turns out that the world to-day goes the same way as the worst of worlds that have been; it simply drifts.[4]

Thus, the world drifts, without a moral code. It is not that we have exchanged an antiquated previous code for a bright new mode of behavior. Instead, modern man aspires to live without *any* moral code. Much of the talk about the "new morality" is better characterized as a departure from any moral standard whatsoever. More precisely, it might be defined as the desire to call the old immorality the new morality. We are not contrasting a rising new civilization with the declining old one, a rising new standard replacing a dying code. In Ortega's words: "If you are unwilling to submit to any norm,

[4] Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, (Norton, 1957), p. 44.

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you have . . . to submit to the norm of denying all morality, and this is not amoral, but immoral. It is a negative morality which preserves the empty form of the other."[5]

C. E. M. Joad suggests that the principal characteristics of a society without moral standards are "luxury, scepticism, weariness, and superstition." He adds that another sure sign of a decadent society is an individual preoccupation with self and a totally subjectivist view of the world and all higher values. Once the individual comes to believe that he may think whatever he likes with equal validity, that any value is no better or worse than any other value, then the decadent society must indeed be at hand.

Such a society, of course, will allow no limitation upon individual sexual mores, and will also undercut other traditional patterns of action. This is readily observable in our own society in the decline in genuine individual charity, mercy, pity, honesty, and unselfishness. We live in an age which has not so much rejected these values as it has simply refused to bother to think about the subject at all. We are becoming, in the truest possible sense of the word, an age without standards.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Art and the Modern World

While it is true that most critics and many minor scribblers are true sons of our present society, it is also true that Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, and the other major literary figures of our time have consistently devoted their art to a bitter rejection of the modern spirit. It seems that meaningful literary production can only arise in those who possess some value system, who reject the flaccid and valueless spirit of the age. Never have we had more novelists and poets . . . never have there been fewer great novels and great poems.

Meanwhile, what sort of art has been produced? Work filled largely with hate, hate directed not merely at individuals but at an entire universe which must be hated simply because it is meaningless.

Coupled with this hatred of all men and all things, so-called "artistic freedom" has released a flood of sexuality, violence, and perversion without a peer in man's recorded history. Joseph Wood Krutch has commented on a list of one hundred books representing this modern tendency that while the list "does include certain works which are neither beatnik, sadistic, existential, nor sexually perverse, at least half – and perhaps

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two-thirds – of them might, I think, be classified as guideposts to perdition."

What, it might be asked, has all this to do with education? Even granted that scientism had stripped us of all values and that this is reflected in our philosophy and our art, what possible connection does this have with what our children are learning in school? Unfortunately, the connection is painfully direct. Before we can begin to discuss the improvement of individuals and of the society which they compose, we must first of all grasp the fact that there *is* a difference between the good and the bad.

If the object of education is the improvement of men, then any system of education that is without values is a contradiction in terms. A system that seeks bad values is bad. A system that denies the existence of values denies the possibility of education. Relativism, scientism, skepticism, and anti-intellectualism, the four horsemen of the philosophical apocalypse, have produced that chaos in education which will end in the disintegration of the West.[6]

Our national prosperity, the welfare of our institutions, and the welfare of all individuals depend directly upon the values which we inculcate in our educational system. If we deny to our children the philosophical framework of values by which they may order their conduct, we are denying them a true education and guaranteeing the decline of our civilization. There are other dimensions to our problem, but this matter of the rejection of value is of prime importance in fully appreciating the sad estate unto which we have fallen.

One hard-headed Yankee who perceived the proper place of moral values and the close connection between self-restraint and freedom was Ralph Waldo Emerson:

All our political disasters grow as logically out of our attempts in the past to do without justice, as the sinking of some part of your house comes of defect in the foundation. One thing is plain; a certain personal virtue is essential to freedom; and it begins to be doubtful whether our corruption in this country has not gone a little over the mark of safety, so that when canvassed we shall be found to be made up of a majority of reckless self-seekers. The divine knowledge has ebbed out of us and we do not know enough to be free. ◈

[6] Robert M. Hutchins, *The Conflict in Education in a Democratic Society*, pp. 71-72.

The next article of this series will discuss "The Decline of Intellect"

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The Good Life

W. M. CURTISS

WHAT CONSTITUTES "the good life"? The question has engaged writers and thinkers through the ages. But the search continues and a moment's reflection reveals why.

The good life is a highly personal and individual concept, meaning something entirely different to one person than to another. And its meaning to any person may change from time to time. Walden Pond was most important to Thoreau, though not to some of his contemporaries.

The good life for a small boy is likely to differ greatly from that for his father or his grandfather. One worker may look upon the compulsory 40-hour week as a chance to get away from distasteful work; another finds the shortened workweek a signal to take on a second job.

Hope and faith that something pleasant will happen in the future has been the good life for many — religion, in its various forms. Abundant food, streets paved with gold, freedom from pain and suffering, eternal life — these are some of the dreams or hopes for the good life.

The feeling of power over men must constitute the good life for some, while others find it revolting. Pursuit of knowledge may be highly rewarding to some persons. Leisure may seem either heaven or hell. The point is that each has his own answer to what is the good life. Or, as Thoreau expressed it: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."

Many persons feel a responsi-

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bility to help arrange the life of others as well as their own. Parents, of course, do this; and rightly so, up to a point. But some elected officials, dictators, teachers, church leaders, and a host of others feel they have the right, the responsibility, and the wisdom to determine what shall be the good life for others. As Dean Acheson commented recently: "Conscience used to be an inner voice of self-discipline; now it is a clarion urge to discipline others." History records the failure of such arrangements, whether attempted by parents or by dictators, the reason being that the good life is so very personal, and so highly variable from person to person. Parents, hoping to bring about the good life for their children, often do precisely the opposite. Elected officials may honestly believe that "an affluent nation can surely assure a minimum income of $3,500 for every family." The belief, of course, is that this would bring about the good life.

Many "utopian" arrangements have been tried over the years. The fact that most were based on the communal principle, "from each according to ability and to each according to need," was a major reason for failure.

Individuals often think that the good life – heaven on earth – will come to them if only they have an abundance of material things or the money to buy them. Who hasn't dreamed how he would use a million dollars or the winnings from a huge lottery? "Boy, what I wouldn't do with all that money!" Or, more modestly, how much better life will be when I get that raise, or when the mortgage is retired!

But, we know that material possessions alone do not guarantee a good life. Such things contribute to the good life, but the circumstances under which material possessions are acquired make a lot of difference.

Beyond Material Things

If, by the good life, we mean an inner satisfaction, contentment, or happiness, then the acquiring of material things is hardly an appropriate measure of such satisfaction. If it were, we could say that a man who has a better home, finer clothes, more television sets, and better cars, has more of the good life than his less wealthy neighbor. Or, we could say that the life of an average American is twice as good as that of his English or French cousin. But we know that the good life as measured by inner satisfaction and pride of accomplishment is not determined by the amount of things a person has.

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Our attempt to help people who seem less well off than we are often consists in giving them material things or the money to buy them. Our government poverty programs are largely based on the assumption that some people have too much and others have too little: Take away from those who have and give to those who have not. Thus, "the good life" would seem to be shared, though it hasn't worked out that way. Instead, it appears that everyone loses – the givers and the receivers.

It is not our purpose to disparage the accumulation or production of wealth on the part of an individual. The relatively free economy of the United States over a period of 150 years, together with a heavy investment of capital in the tools of production, enables a worker to purchase a pair of shoes or a suit of clothes with one-fifth to one-tenth the hours of work required in many other countries. This suggests a possible cure for the poverty found in many parts of the world. But it does not follow that the good life of individuals in such countries will automatically be improved if wealth is forcibly extracted from individuals in wealthy countries and given to those in less wealthy countries.

What then, can be said about how government or society can help an individual attain the good life? Bear in mind that individuals include the young as well as the old, the poor as well as the rich, blacks as well as whites, schooled as well as unschooled, leaders as well as followers. A key, to be so universal, must then have something to do with man's basic nature; and it does, indeed.

Inner Contentment

The secret is self-responsibility. Recall that the good life does not result from an accumulation of material things but involves rather the inner-contentment of living one's own life – of developing one's own potential and being responsible for the results.

It follows that the forceful removal or denial of self-responsibility will diminish the good life. The satisfactions which come from being self-responsible must be well known to almost everyone, out of his own experiences. Experts in human behavior have documented the fact again and again. Who hasn't witnessed the unmistaken joy that comes over a child in taking his first unassisted step or trying to tie his own shoe? "Me do it!" is often the response to offers of adult help, and persistent interference or "help" may produce tantrums.

The words change as the individual ages, and resistance to out-

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side help may be less vocal; but the basic attitude is still there. This is not to say that when one is offered the choice of doing something for himself or of accepting a handout, his response will always be: "I'd rather do it myself!" There is much evidence to the contrary. But, it seems to be human nature to gain satisfaction from being self-responsible — doing things for oneself. The wealth of one's family or of the "affluent society" contributes to a something-for-nothing attitude in many people and is at the root of many of today's problems. The fault is not so much in the wealth, per se, as in the easy way it allows a person to escape self-responsibility.

In the agricultural economy of our colonial period, the family's living was practically limited to what it produced. We were an underdeveloped nation by today's standards, with little in the way of foreign handouts. But the satisfactions of the good life were found in being self-reliant and self-responsible. Children as well as adults had their responsibilities.

Denials of Responsibility

There are today a great many different ways in which persons are being denied the right and privilege of self-responsibility, chief among these denials being the various governmental welfare measures. Administrators of such programs, together with law-makers, observe that some persons are poorer than others; they insist that those of the lower third are "entitled" to a better life and that the cost to the other two-thirds will hardly be felt. Besides, much of the help can come from Washington where the cost will be diffused among other governmental expenditures.

It is but a short step from "they're entitled to it" on the part of administrators to "we demand it" on the part of recipients. Thus, we see demonstrations of the "we demand" type, with leadership to turn such demonstrations into looting and burning and other types of violence. "We're entitled to it; we're just getting our share."

The greatest tragedy of this type of welfare is not its cost in dollars but its effect on the receiver as well as the giver. With the denial of responsibility for self goes a loss of self-respect. The appetite for such handouts is insatiable and the effect on the moral fiber of a people is tremendous. As one person aptly said: "A man deprived of the opportunity of paying his own way, of supporting his children and providing the nurture that will give them healthy bodies and a foun-

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dation of self-respect – a man who cannot accomplish these things through hard work and thrift, *must* become a revolutionary."

The basic satisfaction of doing for oneself seems to be matched by a willingness to accept handouts. It takes courage on the part of wealthy parents to refuse to indulge their children. And the same order of discipline applies in an affluent society with respect to its poor.

We can say, over and over again: "It is for your own good that you earn your own way." But few adults can rise above the temptation of a handout – something for nothing – if it is offered. The injustice is primarily to the receiver in denying him satisfactions through his own efforts. While we cannot do much about the over-indulgent parent, we can recognize that it is not a proper function of government to deny its citizens their self-respect or to encourage the "something for nothing" philosophy.

Something for Nothing

There are other ways in which self-responsibility may be denied. Consider the whole area of jobs and labor relations. A man may strike against his employer and, by violence or threat of violence, keep some other willing worker from taking his job. The right to a job is not a one-sided contract. It implies that someone else has the obligation to supply that job.

Job tenure is of a similar nature. Some jobs, especially in academic circles, carry what amounts to a guarantee that the holder can have the job as long as he wants whether or not he performs responsibly. Or consider the effect of a minimum wage on the person incapable of earning it in open competition. This person may be perfectly willing to work for $1.00 an hour, but when the law says he must be paid $1.60, he may be forced out of work and onto relief. This is hardly the way to develop self-respect.

The guaranteed annual wage or the negative income tax, as a method of meeting welfare needs, can only compound the serious problem of gaining self-respect through individual responsibility.

Higher education has been much publicized of late because of campus disturbances by students. It is easy to pass this off as a "lack of communication," or the "generation gap," or the result of an unpopular war. But, how many of these student demonstrators show any real sense of responsibility for gaining an education? Doesn't society owe them an education! Once upon a time, parents struggled and saved to provide educational opportunities for their chil-

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dren, and most children understood that sacrifice. There was no generation gap on the point. How can a comparable responsibility be aroused in students for whom the government provides?

Laws to "protect the consumer" also have a tendency to deprive a person of his self-responsibility. True, it is a valid function of government to do its best to prevent fraud and stealing, and to enforce contracts. But there are some risks a person can and should assume for himself. For instance, I am not interested in having a serious driving accident or getting killed. If I believe seat belts will help protect me, I'll install and use them. Why should anyone have to compel me to do that – and deprive me of the responsibility?

Compulsory social security likewise deprives people of their own responsibility for thrift and saving. It also destroys the good life of the family as a unit. Self-responsibility and self-respect run from the individual to the family; and the assistance which young people can give their elders voluntarily can be an important part of the good life for all concerned. The gradual weakening of family ties has many causes, but high on the list must be the exorbitant amount of government welfare.

The erosion of self-responsibility and self-respect surely contributes to the general decline of morality in our time. Respect for others stems from self-respect; the self-responsible person respects his neighbor's property as he would his own. He is not likely to throw bricks through school windows, or destroy college property, or join gangs in looting and burning. Such respect for property is the essence of law and order.

Pride in one's accomplishments, responsibility for what one does, and respect for self and others constitutes inner satisfaction, contentment, happiness – in short, the good life. ◈

IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Ed Howe

BEHAVE YOURSELF; let others go to the devil, if they so please. If you behave yourself and do well, that will be the most powerful preaching you can indulge in; noting your example, many on the way to the devil will turn back and follow you to safety.

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CLARENCE B. CARSON

The Rise and Fall of England

10. THE VICTORIAN WAY: AFFIRMED AND REJECTED

THERE WAS a saying among American troops in Europe after World War II, something like this. If a soldier complained about something, anything, he was berated in the following fashion. "What are you complaining about? You never had it so good. You know what your trouble is? You just can't stand prosperity." Quite likely, many of those who taunted gripers in this fashion meant to be using irony. Soldiers rarely think of their lot as a happy one. But, given the context, the words were probably spoken straight at first. They may have been delivered by a combat veteran to a new arrival who had not experienced the rigors of war. If so, he was saying, in effect, that the griper should be glad that he could sleep in a building instead of outside, that he was not subject to strafing, artillery fire, and rockets, that his hours were regular rather than determined by the exigencies of war, and so on.

It is possible, too, that the words were directed to a combat veteran. For the memory of pain and hardship is exceedingly short-lived. A man who has been suffering almost unbearable pain will fall to complaining of trivialities shortly after it is relieved. It is the way of human beings to lose sight of their blessings and complain of their inconveniences. That which has only lately brought great re-

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lief may itself shortly become an object for scorn.

Familiarity Breeds Contempt

So it was for some of the English, in any case. All indications were that in the middle of the nineteenth century the lot of most Englishmen was vastly improved over what it had been. Signs abounded that they were better paid, better fed, had more leisure, and could avail themselves of more of the things which adorn life rather than merely sustain it. Nor was there any reason for doubting that these benefits could be attributed, directly or indirectly, to Britain's stable and balanced government, to the security of persons and property, to the freedom of trade, to the moral code which prevailed, to hard work, to capital investment, and to technological innovations. Yet, in the midst of this spreading prosperity, these very things began to come under attack. A shorthand phrase for those conditions and means by which prosperity was achieved is "The Victorian Way." The Victorian Way came under assault during the Victorian period, though its repudiation would not be completed until early in the twentieth century.

But it would be unjust to the English people and historically inaccurate to suggest that they forgot so quickly. The nagging, questioning, and doubting of the validity of the Victorian Way did get underway in the midst of its triumph. Its inception and spread forms a part of what is to be told here. At the outset, however, this challenge to the Victorian Way was made by a minority, most likely a tiny minority, whereas the vast majority accepted and prized it. Indeed, there were clergymen who pointed out the moral character of the Victorian Way, historians who wove it into its place in English history, statesmen who expounded and defended it, philosophers who claimed it within general theories of progress, and writers who advocated the expansion of it. This story should be alluded to before attending to the critics.

Though Frederic Harrison was exaggerating when he wrote the following in 1882, and obviously more than a little piqued by it all, his words do indicate that there were many who saw virtue in the developments which brought England to greatness:

> Surely no century in all human history was ever so much praised to its face for its wonderful achievements, its wealth and its power, its unparalleled ingenuity and its miraculous capacity for making itself comfortable and generally enjoying

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life. British Associations, and all sorts of associations, economic, scientific, and mechanical, are perpetually executing cantatas in honour of the age of progress. . . . The journals perform the part of orchestra, banging big drums and blowing trumpets. . . .[1]

Macaulay's Whig Interpretation of the History of England

Thomas Babington Macaulay, the historian, is usually credited, or blamed, for being the leading apologist for the Victorian Way. He was the man who first made what is usually called the Whig interpretation of history. He did so in his *History of England* which made its appearance in the middle of the nineteenth century. It sold unusually well for a history, or for anything else. When the first two volumes appeared, 13,000 copies were sold in four months. The next two volumes sold 26,500 copies in ten weeks.[2] Macaulay certainly was not one to hide his light under a bushel; whatever views he held, he held firmly and expressed forthrightly. One gets a sense of the measure of the man in this reference to a work by Robert Southey, Poet Laureate of England:

> It would be scarcely possible for a man of Mr. Southey's talents and acquirements to write two volumes so large as these before us, which should be wholly destitute of information and amusement. . . . We have, for some time past, observed with great regret the strange infatuation which leads the Poet Laureate to abandon those departments of literature in which he might excel, and to lecture the public on sciences of which he has still the very alphabet to learn. He has now, we think, done his worst.[3]

It is not surprising that his own works have come in for strong criticism. Be that as it may, his work pointed out the improvements that had occurred in England since the Glorious Revolution and ascribed these to the security of liberty and property and stable government, among other things. He opened his *History* by declaring that "the general effect of this chequered narrative will be to excite thankfulness in all religious minds and hope in the breasts of all patriots. For the history of our country during the last hundred and sixty years is eminently the history of physical, of moral, and

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[1] Quoted in Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 39.

[2] David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1950), p. 103.

[3] Thomas B. Macaulay, *Miscellaneous Essays and Poems*, I (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1879), p. 475.

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of intellectual improvement."[4] In short, he maintained that "the history of England is emphatically the history of progress."[5] In explaining the difference between England and France – the France of the July (1830) Revolution – Macaulay ascribed it to the political institutions of liberty:

> To what are we to attribute the unparalleled moderation and humanity which the English people have displayed at this great conjuncture? The answer is plain. This moderation, this humanity are the fruits of a hundred and fifty years of liberty. . . . For many generations we have had the trial by jury, the Habeas Corpus Act, the freedom of the press, the right of meeting to discuss public affairs, the right of petitioning the legislature. A vast portion of the population has long been accustomed to the exercise of political functions. . . . Thus our institutions had been so good that they had educated us into a capacity for better institutions.[6]

Lecky and Free Trade

In like manner, W. E. H. Lecky, who published his prodigious *History of Rationalism* at the age of 27, was unstinting in his admiration for and praise of English leadership and economic development. He pointed out that England has been the leader in the development of political economy as a science as well as in mechanical inventions. "It is not surprising," he said, "that a land which has attained this double supremacy, and which possesses at the same time almost unlimited coal-mines, an unrivaled navy, and a government that can never long resist the natural tendency of affairs, should be pre-eminently the land of manufacturers."[7] Lecky was an enthusiastic follower and expounder of developments in political economy from Smith through Say, and ascribed the peace of his times to the applications of these doctrines, particularly to the freeing of trade. He declared that an understanding and application of political economy is the corrective to the evil of war. Political economy denies, he said, that one nation's gain in trade is another's loss. Instead,

> It teaches . . . that each nation has a direct interest in the prosperity of that with which it trades, just as a shopman has an interest in the wealth of his customers. It teaches too that the different markets of the world are so closely connected, that it is quite impossible for a serious derangement to take place in any one of them without its evil effects

[4] Quoted in Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
[5] Quoted in Houghton, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
[6] Macaulay, *op. cit.*, p. 769.
[7] W. E. H. Lecky, *History of Rationalism in Europe*, II (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904, originally pub. 1865), p. 351.

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vibrating through all. . . . Each successive developement of political economy has brought these truths into clearer relief. . . . Every fresh commercial enterprise is therefore an additional guarantee of peace.[8]

The "scheme of progress which political economy reveals" goes something like this, according to Lecky. Men form habits of thrift and self-restraint in order to improve their material condition. As that improves, they develop the gentler ways of civilization.

. . . And the same principle that creates civilisation creates liberty, and regulates and sustains morals. The poorer classes, as wealth, and consequently the demand for their labour, have increased, cease to be the helpless tools of their masters. Slavery, condemned by political economy, gradually disappears. The stigma that attached to labour is removed. War is repressed as a folly and despotism as an invasion of the rights of property. The sense of common interests unites the different sections of mankind, and the conviction that each nation should direct its energies to that form of produce for which it is naturally most suited, effects a division of labour which renders each dependent upon the others. Under the influence of industrial occupations, passions are repressed, the old warlike habits are destroyed, a respect for law, a consideration for the interests of others, a sobriety and perseverance of character are inculcated.[9]

In such fashion, the Victorian Way became a part of the historical perspective for many.

From Throne and Pulpit

Men in other walks of life affirmed the Victorian Way also. Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria, declared in 1851:

"We are living at a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end to which indeed all history points – the realization of the unity of mankind."[10]

In a speech before Parliament, Lord Palmerston said:

"We have shown the example of a nation, in which every class of society accepts with cheerfulness the lot which Providence has assigned to it; while at the same time every individual of each class is constantly striving to raise himself in the social scale – not by injustice and wrong, not by violence and illegality, but by preserving good conduct, and by the steady and energetic execution of the moral and intellectual faculties with which his creator has endowed him."[11]

Speaking from the pulpit, the

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 356.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 367.

[10] Quoted in Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-03.

[11] Quoted in Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1859), p. 404.

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Reverend Charles Kingsley proclaimed the reasons why Englishmen should give thanks to God. He tells how others have been beset by wars and destruction –

> and yet here we are, going about our business in peace and safety in a land which we and our forefathers have found, now for many a year, that just laws make a quiet and prosperous people; that the effect of righteousness is peace, and the fruit of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever; – a land in which the good are not terrified, the industrious hampered, and the greedy and lawless made eager and restless by expectation of change in government; but every man can boldly and hopefully work in his calling, and "whatsoever his hand finds to do, do it with all his might," in fair hope that the money which he earns in his manhood he will be able to enjoy quietly in his old age, and hand it down safely to his children, and his children's children. . . . Oh, my friends, who made us to differ from others, or what have we that we did not receive? Not to ourselves do we owe our blessings. . . . We owe it to our wise Constitution and to our wise Church, the principle of which is that God is Judge and Christ is King. . . .[12]

[12] Charles Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times* (London: Macmillan, 1890, first pub. by Macmillan in 1863), pp. 195-96. This is the same Charles Kingsley who, along with F. D. Maurice, was an early Christian socialist. This description of him, however, may be misleading. Not only does the above quotation not indicate any socialist sentiments, such as we have come to recognize them, but there is good reason to believe that he was a pre-statist socialist. "He looked rather to the extension of the co-operative principle and to sanitary reform for the amelioration of the condition of the people than to any radical political change." *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1955), XIII, 399.

Spencer Optimistic

Herbert Spencer rendered at least a part of the Victorian Way into a philosophical framework. There was probably much about mid-Victorian England that Spencer did not approve, but he approved the general trend toward establishing greater freedom, and mainly wanted the principle expanded until it became universal. His statements on free trade illustrate this penchant in his works:

> Fortunately it is now needless to enforce the doctrine of commercial freedom by any considerations of policy. After making continual attempts to improve upon the laws of trade, from the time of Solon downwards, men are at length beginning to see that such attempts are worse than useless. Political economy has shown us in this matter – what indeed it is its chief mission to show – that our wisest plan is to let things take their own course. An increasing sense of justice, too, has assisted in convincing us. We have here learned, what our forefathers learned in some cases, and what, alas! we have yet to learn in many

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more, that nothing but evil can arise from inequitable regulations. The necessity of respecting the principles of abstract rectitude – this it is that we have had another lesson upon. Look at it rightly and we shall find that all the Anti-Corn-Law League did, with its lectures, its newspapers, its bazaars, its monster meetings, and its tons of tracts, was to teach people – what should have been very clear to them without any such teaching – that no good can come of violating men's rights. By bitter experience and a world of talk we have at length been made partially to believe as much. Be it true or not in other cases, we are now quite certain that it is true in trade. In respect to this at least we have declared that, for the future, we will obey the law of equal freedom.[13]

Spencer was optimistic in thinking that the British had learned their lesson about trade once and for all, but this was the one thing that libertarians managed to get almost all parties to agree to as a cardinal principle for so long.

Samuel Smiles on Thrift

This examination can be closed by referring to the man who has often been singled out as the stereotype of the apologists for the Victorian Way, Samuel Smiles. Samuel Smiles was a popular writer in the latter part of the nineteenth century who did indeed approve the Victorian Way, and who devoted his pen to elucidating its virtues. The titles of his works show what he considered some of those virtues to be: *Self-Help, Thrift, Character,* and *Duty.* He placed great emphasis upon work, saving, honesty, perseverance, charity, and self-help. *Self-Help* made its appearance in 1859 and sold 20,000 copies that year. In addition, some 130,000 copies were sold in the next thirty years. But the reference here will be to another work, in which he discusses saving, capital, and labor:

> The men who economize by means of labor become the owners of capital which sets other labor in motion. Capital accumulates in their hands, and they employ other laborers to work for them. Thus trade and commerce begin.
>
> The thrifty build houses, warehouses, and mills. They fit manufactories with tools and machines. They build ships and send them to various parts of the world. They put their capital together, and build railroads, harbors, and docks. They open up mines of coal, iron, and copper; and erect pumping-engines to keep them clear of water. They employ laborers to work the mines, and thus give rise to an immense amount of employment.
>
> All this is the result of thrift. It is the result of economizing money,

[13] Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics* (New York: Appleton, 1865), p. 334.

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and employing it for beneficial purposes. . . .[14]

This was surely an abstract of the English experience, put into language that every man could understand.

The Victorian Way was not without its exponents, apologists, and defenders, then. Indeed, numbered among them were some, or most, of the illustrious names of the century. But they were matched, and eventually overmatched, by a rising chorus of critics in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the wake of this mounting criticism, the work of many of the most able exponents fell into disrepute, in many circles anyhow. It happened to Macaulay, to Spencer, and, of course, to Smiles. More importantly, the ideas, principles, and practices which were at the heart of the Victorian Way became suspect, and were eventually rejected.

Hybrid Nature of Socialism

To understand the character of this attack on things Victorian and its eventual impact, some observations about socialism are in order. Not that the critics were necessarily socialists: some were, and some were not. But the criticism was certainly grist for the mills of socialists, and they managed somehow to identify themselves with all of it. Socialism was a product of the nineteenth century, and it remains stuck in the grooves of the nineteenth century. More, it is the *hybrid* product of two contradictory strains in nineteenth century thought. It is a hybrid because it is infertile and unproductive (having always to borrow from freedom such innovations as it adopts). It is the product of abstract rationalism, on the one hand, and romanticism, on the other. To put it another way, socialism is the stubborn mule sired by the donkey, abstract rationalism, bred to the flighty mare, romanticism. Like the mule, socialism has some of the worst traits of its forebears: it is as unimaginative as the donkey and as irrational as the horse.

Nonetheless, socialism has an almost irresistible attraction to a certain turn of mind. It attracts because of its criticism and rejection of the way things are, and its promises of the way things will be when they have been reconstructed. Socialism appeals particularly to those who are alienated from and thus do not feel a part of the society in which they live. Its greatest attraction is for intellectuals, particularly those of a literary and artistic

[14] Samuel Smiles, *Thrift* (Chicago: Belfords, Clarke and Co., 1879), pp. 20-21.

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bent. It is probable that, in earlier times, most such men found some religious vocation. But in the eighteenth century, they began to be more numerous as laymen. Since that time, they appear to have increased greatly in number and influence.

Enter, the Critic

Much of the initial criticism of Victorian society came from literary romantics, from poets, from architects, from essayists, from novelists, and from dilettanti who dabbled in all these things. They not only justified their alienation from society but also gloried in it. To be alienated from society was a badge of distinction to many romantics; it was a sign of superiority. Society was vulgar, insensitive, unaesthetically inclined, materialistic, practical, and almost wholly unattractive. Moreover, society has a way of imposing its standards, however subtly, upon all within its orbit. Many romantics had subsumed libertarian ideas into their outlook and would think of themselves as liberals; but they went beyond seeking freedom from governmental restraint; they also sought freedom from the prescriptions of society. They tended toward anarchy. But some romantic intellectuals went even further, seeking not only to be free from social prescription but at the same time trying to prescribe for society. When they sought to do this by governmental action, they usually became socialists of some sort.

There was a great range and variety to the criticism of Victorian England, from the criticism of flaws to the wholesale condemnation of the social order. Charles Dickens was one who highlighted many of the flaws in his numerous novels. He satirized "poor law institutions, Chancery, and judicial procedure in general, profiteering private schools, and many other social ills of his times. . . . Having been a poor boy himself he had an instinctive and burning sympathy with the poor."[15] Nor should there be any doubt that he frequently had a reformist purpose in mind. "In all my writings," he said on one occasion, "I hope I have taken every available opportunity of showing the want of sanitary improvements in the neglected dwellings of the poor."[16] Even so, it is not clear that Dickens had much more in mind than that men should reform their ways, and that the poor should struggle to better themselves.

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[15] Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-14.

[16] Quoted in G. D. Klingopulos, "The Literary Scene," *From Dickens to Hardy*, Boris Ford, ed. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), p. 70.

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Thomas Carlyle was quite different from Dickens and a much deeper critic of his age. He saw the age as common and unheroic, and lacking in leadership or traditions that make for greatness. One of his characters exclaims:

"Thus, too, does an observant eye discern everywhere that saddest spectacle: The Poor perishing, like neglected, foundered Draught-Cattle, of Hunger and Over-work; the Rich still more wretchedly of Idleness, Satiety, and Over-growth. The Highest in rank, at length, without honour from the Lowest; scarcely, with a little mouth-honour, as from tavern-waiters who expect to put in the bill. Once-sacred Symbols fluttering as empty Pageants, whereof men grudge even the expense; a World becoming dismantled: in one word, the Church fallen speechless, from obesity and apoplexy; the State shrunken into a Police-Office, straitened to get its pay!"[17]

Of Carlyle's impact, an historian says: "By the strength of his convictions and the extraordinary language in which he clothed them, he caused many Englishmen to share his dissatisfaction with the materialism of the age and to give more thought to moral and social issues."[18]

[17] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (New York: Dutton, 1908), pp. 174-75.

[18] W. E. Lunt, *History of England* (New York: Harper, 1957, 4th ed.), p. 752.

Matthew Arnold's "Populace"

Matthew Arnold was a much clearer case of the rejecter of Victorian England. He satirized and held up to scorn the Englishman's fascination with machinery, his worship of wealth, and his vaunted liberty to do as he pleased. The middle class, he said, were *Philistines*. "For *Philistine* gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children; and therein it specially suits our middle class, who not only do not pursue sweetness and light, but who even prefer to them that sort of machinery of business, chapels, tea-meetings, and addresses from Mr. Murphy [Mr. Murphy was depicted as boorishly intolerant of Roman Catholics], which makes up the dismal and illiberal life on which I have so often touched."[19] The English aristocracy he calls the Barbarians. In a passage dripping with satire, Arnold describes some of the salient features of this class:

. . . The Barbarians, to whom we all owe so much, and who reinvigorated and renewed our worn-out Europe, had, as is well known, eminent merits. . . . The Barbarians brought with them that staunch individualism, as the modern phrase

[19] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, R. H. Super, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965), p. 140.

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is, and that passion for doing as one likes. . . . The Barbarians, again, had the passion for field-sports; and they have handed it on to our aristocratic class, who of this passion too, as of the passion for asserting one's personal liberty, are the great natural stronghold. . . .[20]

He would classify as Philistines, too, all that portion of the working class which either by its ambitions seeks to be a part of the middle class or by organizing in labor unions hopes to occupy the place of dominance held by the middle class.

. . . But that vast portion, lastly, of the working class which, raw and half-developed, has long lain half-hidden amidst its poverty and squalor, and is now issuing from its hiding-place to assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes, and is beginning to perplex us by marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking what it likes, — to this vast residuum we may with great propriety give the name of *Populace*.[21]

What was the point of all this, and much more besides? What was the point of describing England as divided into *Barbarians, Philistines,* and *Populace*? Matthew Arnold was saying that Victorian England lacked true culture and was tending toward anarchy — to the loss of cohesion, to disintegration. England would be saved, if at all, he taught, by turning to the State.

Thus, in our eyes, the very framework and exterior order of the State, whoever may administer the State, is sacred; and culture is the most resolute enemy of anarchy, because of the great hopes and designs for the State which culture teaches us to nourish. But as, believing in right reason, and having faith in the progress of humanity towards perfection, and ever labouring for this end, we grow to have clearer sight of the ideas of right reason, and of the elements and helps of perfection, and come gradually to fill the framework of the State with them, to fashion its internal composition and all its laws and institutions conformably to them, and to make the State more and more the expression, as we say, of our best self, which is not manifold, and vulgar, and unstable, and contentious, and ever-varying, but one, and noble, and secure, and peaceful, and the same for all mankind. . . .[22]

Arnold is a near perfect example of the confused joining of abstract rationalism and romanticism to reach a conclusion with deep inner contradictions. He abstracted society so as to arrive at disintegration in his description, a disintegration which his very analysis produced. Then, he turned

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 140-41.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 223-24.

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off his analytical powers, such as they were, when he looked at the state, and made it an object of romantic adoration. He was, of course, following the path already trod by many German romantics and by the spiritual godfather of all romantics, Jean Jacques Rousseau.

Ruskin's Romanticism

The final step from the rejection and denunciation of the Victorian Way can be illustrated by reference to John Ruskin. Ruskin disliked machinery, repetitive tasks, mass produced articles, laissez-faire, competition, the law of supply and demand, and just about everything associated with Victorian England. He longed, mainly, to see medieval society restored, or, at least, medieval craftsmanship, and things of that sort. He described his ideal society in this way:

> I have already stated that no machines moved by artificial power are to be used on the estates of the society; wind, water, and animal force are to be the only motive powers employed, and there is to be as little trade or importation as possible; the utmost simplicity of life, and restriction of possession, being combined with the highest attainable refinement of temper and thought. Everything that the members of any household can sufficiently make for themselves, they are so to make, however clumsily; but the carpenter and smith, trained to perfectest work in wood and iron, are to be employed on the parts of houses and implements in which finish is essential to strength. The ploughshare and spade must be made by the smith, and the roof and floors by a carpenter; but the boys of the house must be able to make either a horseshoe, or a table.[23]

Ruskin could, of course, be precise and analytical, as in his discourses on political economy, but when he visualized the society to supplant the present one, he became a full-fledged romantic. That he became a socialist, of some variety, will appear from the following. "The first duty of a state," he said, "is to see that every child born therein shall be well housed, clothed, fed and educated, till it attains years of discretion." To accomplish this, "the government must have an authority over the people of which we do not so much as dream."[24]

Of course, the above only touches the surface of the critiques, attacks, denunciations, and rejection of the Victorian Way. Many other people and works would have to be examined to get to its full flavor, and many other facets of the attack examined. For

[23] John Ruskin, *Ruskin's Views of Social Justice*, James Fuchs, ed. (New York: Vanguard Press, 1926), pp. 29-30.

[24] Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 473.

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eventually everything Victorian became suspect: the architecture, the furniture, the morals, the productive system, the government, and so on. The debunking of things Victorian reached its peak in the 1920's, following the publication of Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918) and *Queen Victoria* (1921). In the wake of this rejection, D. H. Lawrence said:

> Now although perhaps nobody knew it, it was ugliness which really betrayed the spirit of man in the nineteenth century. The great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of industry committed in the palmy Victorian days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, ugliness, ugliness: meanness and formless and ugly surroundings, ugly ideals, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly love, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationship between workers and employers.[25]

The English people, then, did not simply forget the principles and practices which had made England great. They were turned against them. The attack upon the Victorian Way was kept up until the very thought of it began to be distasteful, at least to anyone of literary or artistic awareness. Those who had defended it and expounded its principles became suspect also. The rejection of existing society was but a prelude, of course, to a vision of a new society to supplant it. Such visions were most effectively pushed by socialists. To that part of the story we may now turn. ◈

[25] Klingopulos, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

The next article in this series will pertain to "The Fabian Thrust to Socialism."

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Government in the Power Business

FIFTEEN, ten, or even five years ago Edwin Vennard's *Government in the Power Business* (McGraw-Hill, $7.95) would have been an unpopular book. But not now. Its double-edged thesis is that private—or investor-owned—electric power companies can deliver good service at the cheapest possible market prices where government-owned and operated facilities can only give the consumer a competitive edge at the expense of the taxpayer who is forced to make up for a hidden subsidy. In 1964, Barry Goldwater was hooted down for suggesting that the Tennessee Valley Authority steam plants and distribution systems, which have nothing whatsoever to do with navigation and flood control, should be sold to private investors. But even in 1964 the notion that there is something inherently noble and untouchable in public power was fast becoming a cliché. Nobody was out crusading for more TVAs.

Mr. Vennard, who is the Managing Director of the Edison Electric Institute, does not mention politics as such. He accentuates the positive, relying on careful cost studies which he sets forth not only in clear prose but in a series of admirable tables and charts. A closely-knit chapter shows in detail how the investor-owned power companies fought to change the ideological climate by emphasizing such factors as quality of service and price.

The story more or less tells itself. In 1943 fifty-five per cent of the people favored government-ownership of power stations; only 31 per cent were for private power. But the intensive sales and marketing efforts of the investor-owned companies during the early postwar years, coupled with a good public information program, began to take hold in a slow but sure manner. By the time the early fifties had rolled around, the curves on the graph had crossed, and by 1955 a survey showed that 46 per cent of the people had come to favor investor-owned plants as against 40 per cent who were still for government ownership. In 1965 the figure for investor-owned sen-

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timent became a majority figure, at 51 per cent. Those who were for government-owned power had declined to some 35 per cent, an ebb-tide figure which would have been incomprehensible to such old-time public power enthusiasts as the late Senator George Norris of Nebraska. At this rate the TVA steam generation plants and transmission lines, exclusive of some facilities which serve the Atomic Energy Commission's Oak Ridge nuclear development, may some day be sold to investor-owned power companies serving the southern Appalachian area.

In a long chapter on the TVA and other government ventures in the power business, Mr. Vennard proves that public power is usually a cheat. The word is mine, not Mr. Vennard's, but when a public project which pays no Federal income taxes claims "yardstick" value how can you describe it as anything other than dishonest? The TVA was born in duplicity, the excuse being that flood control, navigation, and "national defense" required a series of dams along the river system in question. The sales of electricity generated at the dam sites were supposed to be incidental to the main purposes of the development. But, as Mr. Vennard says, "within a year, Dr. Arthur E. Morgan, the first chairman of TVA, stated unequivocally to the Senate Appropriations Committee that power production was the major purpose of the Authority."

In 1935, two years after the passage of the TVA Act, Commissioner Stanley Reed, representing the TVA, told the Supreme Court that "the Act would be invalid" unless it were assumed that the dams were primarily to improve navigation. Nevertheless, in spite of the Constitution, the TVA eventually went into the power business with a vengeance, building steam plants to supplement its water power and competing with investor-owned companies.

The TVA has made certain payments in lieu of taxes to state and local governments, but never in the same amounts that have been exacted from the purely commercial suppliers of electricity. "On the average," says Mr. Vennard, "electric companies pay 2.33 per cent of their gross plant investment in state and local taxes yearly. This is about two-and-one-half times the rate paid by TVA." Moreover, the investor-owned companies pay on the average 2.64 per cent of their gross investment in Federal income taxes to TVA's zero amount. When you figure that the cost of money to a Federally-owned power installation is much less than what private companies have to pay in the capital market,

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the argument that the "public" benefits from government-owned facilities stands exposed for the sham that it happens to be.

In the West, the needs of irrigation may provide a comprehensible reason for building big dams at the taxpayers' expense. Certainly the reason seemed compelling in the thirties, when capital was scarce and only the government seemed willing to dam rivers in Texas, in Arizona, and in the Pacific Northwest. But the attempt to blanket the nation with seven regional authorities along the lines of the TVA died a prolonged death in Congress. The feeling developed that a small group of politicos were bent on using the TVA method to bring about government control of the economy without ever letting the people vote directly upon it. Norman Thomas, the veteran socialist, gave the show away when he said that the TVA is "the only genuinely socialistic act" in the New Deal.

It was in the thirties, too, when it seemed reasonable for farmers to ask for government help in the form of the REA-financed generating plants and transmission lines. But now that the nation's farms are thoroughly electrified, the REA has been trying to expand into densely populated areas, using 2 per cent money to do it. Mr. Vennard is not the sort of person to say he is outraged by this, but he lets the reader know how he feels by a measured display of statistical proof that the taxpayer is being cheated again.

In the last analysis it might be said that the public power ideologues have lost the battle because they have been outflanked. Time was when a seemingly good case could be made out for municipal power plants. But the technology of long-distance power transmission kept improving, and whole regions were benefited by interconnected grids which could supply their needs at constantly decreasing prices for volume use. The lone municipal station couldn't keep up with the parade. So the political steam went out of the public power movement.

Mr. Vennard has great hopes for the future of investment-owned power companies, for the percentage of government-owned, power-producing capacity, which grew so rapidly in the thirties and the forties, has recently been leveling off. People are becoming aware of their stake in an enterprise system. The day of cheap atomic power is dawning, and good dam sites are running out. All of this means that the demagogues are running out of excuses for power socialism. ◈

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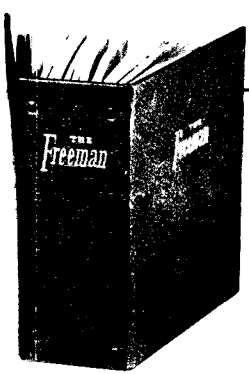

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